CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.750
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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 12 September 1996, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Dembinski (Poland)

GE.96-63818 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 750th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Kazakhstan, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. Once we have heard the statements, I intend to suspend the plenary meeting for 20 minutes in order to allow delegations to examine the revised draft annual report of the Conference to the United Nations General Assembly, as contained in document CD/WP.478/Rev.1. Yesterday, I announced that in view of lack of time the secretariat would only produce a list of changes. However, the secretariat was able to produce a revised version of the draft report, in English only, incorporating all the changes that were agreed yesterday.

I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Kazakhstan, Mr. Volkov.

Mr. VOLKOV (Kazakhstan): First of all, Mr. President, please allow me on behalf of the delegation of Kazakhstan to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. You have entered the office at a crucial time for the CD but we are confident that your diplomatic skills, experience and professionalism will contribute to a successful closure of the work of the Conference in the 1996 session.

I would also like to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Urrutia of Peru, and to all members of the Conference on Disarmament for the positive response to Kazakhstan's application for participation in the work of the Conference as an observer.

We have been following closely the final discussion in the Conference and its Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, and we are greatly impressed by the global importance of the substantive problems discussed in this forum and the high professionalism of its participants. At this initial stage of our participation in the Conference, our delegation has been observing mainly the negotiating process - getting familiar with the work and practices in the CD, but I think that in the future our delegation's participation will be more active and we will be able to contribute more to the work of the Conference.

This year the Conference has concentrated its work on a priority task bestowed upon it by the international community - to finalize the text of a universal, multilaterally and effectively verifiable comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty. In our view, the conclusion of such a treaty would become a meaningful measure in halting nuclear testing and would thus contribute to a process of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects and therefore to the enhancement of international peace and security.

We deeply regret that the painstaking negotiations and consultations on a nuclear test ban did not result in the desired consensus on the text. In this situation, the initiative of the Australian Government, supported by a number of other countries, appears to be the only remaining possibility to grasp the chance for the final realization of the world's decades-long aspiration to achieve a total ban on all nuclear-weapons explosions.

(Mr. Volkov, Kazakhstan)

Kazakhstan has already stated its position with regard to the draft treaty text, as contained in CD/NTB/WP.330/Rev.2, in the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, whereby it was among those countries which, although they did not see the draft treaty text as being perfect, nevertheless gave their support to the draft text. We believe that by constraining the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons, this treaty would constitute an effective nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation measures and would also give an impulse to further steps in the realization of a systematic process of nuclear disarmament.

The Government of Kazakhstan has been resolutely pursuing a policy of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, plainly evident from a record of systematic measures undertaken by Kazakhstan within the past five years. Not so long ago Kazakhstan had an option of "going nuclear", but instead of this, the Government of Kazakhstan became one of the initiators of transforming the START-I Treaty into a five-party agreement. Kazakhstan then signed the Lisbon Protocol, thus committing itself to removing all nuclear weapons from its territory for their destruction. In 1993, Kazakhstan joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and in April 1995 the last nuclear warheads were removed from the soil of Kazakhstan.

The achievement of a universal ban on nuclear-test explosions has been always one of the strongest aspirations of the people of Kazakhstan: over a period of almost 45 years, 459 nuclear explosions were carried out at the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site in Kazakhstan and 113 tests were conducted in the atmosphere. The test site was shut down in August 1991, following the decree of President Nursultan Nazabayev. Last year in the General Assembly Kazakhstan wholeheartedly supported United Nations resolution 50/65, and today, in full conformity with its principled position on disarmament issues, the Government of Kazakhstan has decided to join Australia and other countries in co-sponsoring a draft resolution on a comprehensive test-ban treaty. For Kazakhstan, a country whose people suffered immensely from the half-century of nuclear testing inflicted upon them - in the atmosphere, underground and on land - there is no question whether or not to endorse the treaty which would stop all nuclear-test explosions everywhere and for all time.

The delegation of Kazakhstan saluted the General Assembly decision to adopt the comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty and call upon all States to sign and to become parties to the treaty at the earliest date.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Kazakhstan for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the next speaker, the representative of the United Kingdom, Ambassador Sir Michael Weston.

Sir Michael WESTON (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I should like to make a statement on behalf of the Western Group on the future agenda of the Conference on Disarmament.

The 21 members of the Western Group would like to thank the Special Coordinator on the review of the agenda for the strenuous efforts he has made throughout the year in carrying out consultations on this complicated issue.

(Sir Michael Weston, United Kingdom)

His thoughtful report of 3 September and his informal oral report of 23 May to the CD provide a sound basis for further consultations to determine how the CD should take its work forward in 1997. We therefore welcome the proposal that the President of the CD should conduct consultations both now and during the inter-sessional period in order to produce a new substantive agenda for the work of the CD. We lend our full support to all efforts aimed at producing a consensus within the Conference.

The Western Group has taken note of the many statements and proposals made by delegations from all groups during this session on the subject of the CD's agenda. We encourage the President in consultation with all delegations to study and reflect on the ideas and proposals which have been brought forward. In this regard the Western Group wishes to contribute constructively to the process of consultations by making the following general observations.

The current CD agenda requires reform and updating. As the Special Coordinator for the agenda noted in his report of 23 May, "it is accepted that the CD should have a new agenda that could boldly reflect the changes that have occurred and have been occurring in the world for some years now". In our view the agenda should also reflect the progress made in disarmament and non-proliferation. We should aim to develop a new forward-looking and realistic agenda which can attract consensus among the expanded CD.

The agenda should strike a balance between nuclear and conventional items. The focus should remain on substantive negotiations and discussions.

Negotiations already endorsed by the CD should be pursued with the establishment of ad hoc committees in 1997.

We recall that on 23 March 1995 the CD accepted the mandate for an ad hoc committee to begin substantive negotiations on a fissile material cut-off convention. The CD also agreed on a candidate for the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee. Since then we have continued to urge the immediate commencement of these negotiations. We firmly believe that the Ad Hoc Committee should be established promptly.

Ad hoc committees could be set up immediately on negative security assurances, outer space and transparency in armaments. The mandates for the Ad Hoc Committees could be updated.

We fully support the Special Coordinator's conclusions, which seem to attract consensus, that certain items are outdated and accordingly should be revised or deleted. Other items could also be established.

In this context two broad agenda items entitled "Nuclear disarmament" and "Conventional disarmament" could be established to reflect the need for balance in the agenda.

(Sir Michael Weston, United Kingdom)

We have also taken note with interest of the remarks made by the Special Coordinator concerning anti-personnel land-mines.

We look forward to working together with the President and all delegations of the CD in order to agree a new agenda. The CD should remain flexible and open-minded, willing to address relevant issues in disarmament as appropriate.

Mr. ARMSTRONG (New Zealand): I speak this morning on behalf of three delegations. Canada, Australia and New Zealand have associated themselves with the statement made here today by the United Kingdom as Coordinator of the Western Group. It is our strong hope that that statement will contribute to the CD's being able to reach an early consensus in 1997 on a comprehensive agenda so as to facilitate progress in constructive efforts in both the nuclear and weapons of mass destruction, and conventional disarmament fields. As our delegations have indicated in statements in the Conference and in other forums this year, we are interested in working for agreement in the Conference on an appropriate framework for the discussion of nuclear disarmament questions, as part of a future comprehensive agenda. We therefore look forward to cooperating with the President during his inter-sessional consultations on all aspects of the CD's future agenda.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of New Zealand for his statement. That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage?

As I announced at the beginning of this meeting, I shall now suspend the plenary meeting for 20 minutes in order to allow all delegations to make sure that all the changes that were agreed upon yesterday are included in the revised draft annual report before you.

The meeting was suspended at 10.40 a.m. and resumed at 10.55 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: The 750th plenary meeting is resumed.

We shall now start the consideration and adoption of the draft annual report of the Conference to the United Nations General Assembly, as contained in document CD/WP.478/Rev.1

Since we have had the opportunity to consider this draft report paragraph by paragraph, I intend to proceed with its consideration section by section, drawing your attention only to those parts which were subject to amendments. It goes without saying that the blanks will be filled by the secretariat.

Are there any comments on section I, "Introduction"? It is adopted.

I shall now proceed to section II, "Organization of work of the Conference". As agreed, in paragraph 14, on page 6, Cyprus has been added to the list of countries having applied for membership. Paragraph 17, on page 7, was amended, as agreed. A new paragraph 19 was inserted, as agreed. I should now like to invite you to turn your attention to part F, "Review of the agenda

(The President)

of the Conference". Paragraph 20 was revised, as agreed. Two new paragraphs, 21 and 22, which were agreed upon yesterday, have been incorporated. May I consider that section II is adopted?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I now invite you to turn your attention to section III, "Substantive work of the Conference during its 1996 session". In paragraph 31, on page 11, a new document presented by Canada, CD/1435, has been listed. Part B, entitled "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", paragraphs 33 to 39, reflect the agreement reached yesterday on the contents and reorganization of these paragraphs. I recognize the representative of India.

Mr. RAO (India): I would propose that, in paragraph 39 (e), an editorial change be made to reflect the fact that document CD/1433 was transmitted on behalf of the Group of 21.

The PRESIDENT: The secretariat has taken note of this editorial change. May I take it that this section is adopted?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I should now like to put for decision the draft annual report in its entirety. May I take it that the Conference decides to adopt this report?.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to take this opportunity to thank all delegations for the spirit of compromise and cooperation which allowed us to conclude our work as scheduled.

As this is the last plenary meeting of the 1996 session of the CD, I would like to make some concluding remarks as President of the Conference.

This has been a long and very arduous session. It was in turn exciting and frustrating, encouraging and disappointing, but - in the end - rewarding by its historical dimension. We have all worked hard, even though only one ad hoc committee, that on a nuclear test ban, has been re-established and working under the able chairmanship of the distinguished representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Jaap Ramaker. Heeding the call addressed to the CD in General Assembly resolution 50/65, we have been therefore able in our substantive work to concentrate undivided attention on continued efforts to elaborate a draft CTBT.

Our mandate was clear: "to conclude, as a task of the highest priority, a universal and multilaterally and effectively verifiable comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty which contributes to nuclear disarmament and the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects, so as to enable its signature by the outset of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly".

(The President)

Throughout the year, we have painstakingly sought to pursue that goal with dedication, good will and a spirit of cooperation on the part of all involved, in order to discharge our mandate in a timely fashion.

We can, I believe, take comfort and satisfaction from the fact that by its action of 10 September, the United Nations General Assembly recognized the intrinsic value of our efforts. It recognized the significance and value of the results of our negotiating effort - for the cause of non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and ultimately for peace and international security.

The overwhelming support which the resolution in question received in the General Assembly last Tuesday confirms that it would have been unforgivable for the draft CTBT to be discarded and forgotten. Indeed, it was right and appropriate that the draft CTBT has been taken to the broader international community for it to judge for itself the ultimate merit and significance of a complex draft document that took two and a half years of hard work. A document which has pinned the hopes of ordinary people everywhere. I am confident that in the end the standing of the CD is intact, if not enhanced. The credit cannot be denied.

The record of the concluding session is remarkable also on an issue other than substance. Thanks to the tireless efforts and dedication of the successive Presidents of the CD over the last few years, and especially in 1996, we have seen the membership of the CD go to 61 States. As a result the CD has become a body balanced and more representative of the international community. In sum, it has become better prepared to deal with the complex challenges of the post-cold-war international environment. However, the question of the CD membership is still unfinished business. In keeping with the request of the Conference on Disarmament, it is my intention as President whose term of office expires at the end of the year to continue consultations on a further expansion of its membership and to report to the CD at the beginning of its 1997 session.

With the CTBT taken off the agenda of the Conference, the problem poses itself: what decisions can be made in that respect to assure a possibly smooth opening of the next session and the CD work thereafter as productive as feasible? To these ends, I shall seek to use the intervening inter-sessional time to pursue tasks relating to the substance of the CD's work.

In order to prepare for the most efficient commencement of the session, I intend to continue consultations pursued by my predecessors as well as by Ambassador Meghlaoui, the Special Coordinator on the review of the future agenda and programme of work of the CD. In the first place, it will be my intention to conduct intensive consultations with a view to developing a basis for consensus on the issue of nuclear disarmament and to report thereon to the Conference at the beginning of its session in 1997. I shall also explore the possibility of reactivating all the ad hoc committees which did not resume work in 1996, including that on "cut-off".

Obviously, in dealing with the CD's future agenda and programme of work for 1997, we need to provide for any possible requests and recommendations to emanate from the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly.

(The President)

Looking at things from the perspective of my country's national concerns, for instance, it would be desirable to introduce a greater balance in the agenda. The possibility of constructive consideration of the different aspects of conventional arms, including those of transparency in armaments and land-mines, would commend itself in the first place.

As you will appreciate, with that ambitious task for the months ahead, your President will not be idle in the inter-sessional period. But he will not let delegations be idle either. I will be consulting you over and over again in order not to err in my judgement. I am confident that I shall be receiving full cooperation from all delegations in order to discharge my Presidential duties. It is my hope that, as a result, I will be able to facilitate the tasks of the incoming President, the distinguished representative of the Republic of Korea.

I should like to thank all delegations, coordinators of regional groups and China for their cooperation and courtesy shown to me, as President, for this final, emotionally charged and challenging part of the session. It has been an honour to preside over the CD at a moment with crucial implications for the CD.

I wish to address special thanks and words of warm appreciation to the members of the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament, who, under the able leadership of the Secretary-General of the Conference and Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, and the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Abdelkadar Bensmail, have been rendering me invaluable assistance. On behalf of all members of the Conference, I also wish to assure the Secretary of the NTB Ad Hoc Committee, other secretariat staff members, the interpreters and translators of our gratitude for their competence and goodwill on which we depended for the smooth and effective functioning of this body.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 21 January 1997, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.